

/73 cont./

142 In some few cases, hair becoming thin due to loss; not, however,  
144 complete baldness. Rare and late graying, thanks to the use  
of some dyeing lotions. No case of albinism or erythrism in  
the eight or ten thousand Indians whom we have visited.

The rest of the body is not very pilose; the hair is fine  
and brown, more or less the color of the skin, and thus it is  
barely distinguishable from it.

He is of short stature and short neck. They ridicule the  
whites for having so long a neck. Well-formed torso, slightly  
longer /74/ than the inferior members on those of the male  
sex, and with an even more noticeable difference on those of  
the female sex, without, however, coming to be inelegant.  
Broad-chested, with an ample thorax, and with hips consid-  
erably narrower than the shoulders. In the men, after 40  
[145] years of age, the belly often large and sagging, which gives the  
[262] torso a chubby appearance. The disproportionate development  
of the stomach, as a result of an excess of nourishment prepon-  
derantly of mandioca flour, is already noticeable in all the  
children from three or four years of age.

[832] The young woman is always plump in body, which is  
considered a feature of elegance; she sometimes comes to  
exhibit a chubby appearance. Ordinarily the women have  
the bust elegantly inclined backwards, perhaps due to the  
way they carry the loads, in large baskets the length of their  
backs, but tied to the forehead with embira. Perhaps this is  
also the cause of an exaggerated development of the sternum.

[832] The individuals of the female sex have the gluteal region  
well developed, although not exaggeratedly, a quality, by  
the way, appreciated also as a factor of female elegance.

\* [192] For this reason, the ones with a slimmer body are objects of  
derision, as desnalgadas /thin ones/, duxkú. It seems, however,

• [481] that there is no artificial process for the development of that  
region, and that the very way of walking, with the torso well  
arched toward the rear, the abdomen forward, and the chest  
and head quite erect, or even inclined backward, is what sets  
off the gluteal proportions.

/74 cont./

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Arms and legs well formed (9).

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9. "The Tucano type presents quite a good appearance. Of regular stature, light bronze color, round head and eyes (?), hair generally black and short; he has a conjunction of such handsome proportions that, in perfect immobility, he could be taken as an artistic statue of bronze." Mons. Lourenço Giordano (Boletim Salesiano, February of 1918, p. 31).

The former notably developed through the exercise of rowing, which gives them a span of arms always greater than the height, up to 10 or even 15 centimeters.

Muscular chest in the men. Hemispherical and voluminous breasts in the maidens, also constituting an element of elegance for the young women. Sagging like the udder of a nanny goat in the women beyond a certain age. This due to the fact that they are always bending and swinging when they work (10).

[145]  
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\*[192]

10. Slender and long breasts are likewise objects of derision. They nickname such women "mother of the Curupira, Borará-paxló." We have seen women with breasts so long that, passed under the arms, they are sucked by the children placed behind them on the back.

/75/ Small hands, regular fingers. Feet, on the contrary, large; the tip of the toes is wide, as in a fan, due to the way of walking. Digits with a narrow base and flattened top, with a wide space between them, especially between the great one /Port. polegar, thumb or great toe/ and the next one; a fact that allows them notable prehension (securing and raising objects with the feet, or even guiding the wheel of a launch and rowing).

/76 cont. //

732

/footnote 14 cont./ due to weakness of the organs, were not able to walk until five years of age, after long treatment. Among the cases of pronounced hebetude, we recall two adults of the male sex, one from the Huhú tribe in Uapum-cachoeira (river Atari), and the other a Taryana of Iauareté, known as Marcelino, "Contented," because he laughs at anything.

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Completing this profile, it should be noted that they are slow of movement, at times clumsy in their way of walking. They walk with a short step (15).

15. In the military formations of the children, at one of the schools of the Salesian Missions, we could verify the tendency to accelerate the march.

like small jumps; many drag slightly and set the tip of the toes apart laterally, and the heel barely touches the ground.

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They do not remain on their feet very long, almost always leaning more on one foot (the left one) and just on the tip of the other one. The woman withstands being on her feet less than the man. The most common and lasting position, when still, is the squat; it is the normal position for eating, even when they could do it sitting down. When they sit, they prefer low seats or the ground, and then they never cross the legs.

Let us now note some features that vary in this profile that we have sketched.

2) Pirá-tapuya type.

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Skin lighter than in the Tukano, and face slightly or markedly elongated. Zygoma less prominent. Lissotrichous hair, lighter brown.

/137 cont./

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If every human soul is invisible, that of the Indian constitutes a mystery. Those who have lived with them for decades and thought they knew the individuals in depth have surprises that are not infrequent.

To be human as he is, the native naturally presents good and bad qualities, like any other human being, some of them taking a color or relief that the environment of deprivation and isolation facilitates and that for this reason stand out more to the eyes of the civilized man who visits them. We shall point out in the following some quite general ones, which for this reason seem to characterize the native mentality and education, admitting that there could be some very rare exception.

1) Intellectual and physical slowness.

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[872]

On the one hand, the material life to which they are forced and, on the other, the almost asphyxiating subjection to the tribal laws, which do not allow /138/ discussion, do not leave any room for speculation or, let us say, for the exercise of the theoretical intelligence. This is proved by their difficulty in learning a religious truth and that of the school child in solving the simplest arithmetic problem. For the totality of the school children, the five or six years of studies in the boarding-school regime are not enough for them to be able to learn the four operations. The Indian, just as he is slow in movement physically (2),

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2. Perhaps, studied under the bio-physiological aspect, this slowness could be partially corrected by an adequate dietary regimen. They are certainly receiving some correction, more psychological in nature, during the years that they spend in the Mission, especially the students in the boarding schools.

is also slow in giving us the most obvious response. Slow in understanding an order we give him, he encounters difficulty in following our reasoning when we talk with him. Ordinarily

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The Amazon forest, interlaced as it is by lianas (a little less, it is true, than appears to anyone who only sees it from the bank of the rivers), is crossed with some difficulty, and perhaps for this reason is not crisscrossed with trails. The custom of the Indians always to walk one behind the other, never side by side, is well known. It is what is called "Indian file," that is, one by one. The native does not go very far into the forest; he is afraid of Wāx-tī (VII -- 4, d (5)). As for his clearing, it is even desirable that there is no path to reveal the site. In this way it will be better sheltered from thefts. For these reasons roads are not opened, except for those that lead from the maloca or povoado to the landing place, ordinarily a few dozen or, at most, one or two hundred meters in extent.

\*[192]

/252/ They discover, however, shorter routes than the interminable windings by way of the rivers or igarapés to go from one maloca to another. Such routes, as they are more frequented for the exchange of women, feasts, or trade, become better and constitute what is called varadouro (in Tukano ma'á) (84).

84. It seems that originally the Tukano term ma'á meant only the route that the canoe was to follow in the dangerous crossings of the cachoeiras. Today the term ma'á is used as an equivalent to the Portuguese words: varadouro, caminho, estrada, etc.

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\*[192]

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All the transportation of cargo by land is done by means of the aturás /carrying baskets/, or pi'l, which the woman carries on her back.

During the time of high water in the rivers canals navigable by canoes are formed within the forest, since the wilderness becomes a sea, and the native takes advantage of that in order to shorten the trips; his canoe takes a shortcut through the forest, instead of following all the sinuosity of the river. Their topographic memory of the rivers on which they live, going up and coming down, does not let them be led astray.

\*192 /337 cont./

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Mĩĩ is probably from the same root as mĩĩ, which means drowned, immersed, hidden under the water (44).

44. We were not able to learn of any sign of special veneration toward the water of the rivers. Nevertheless it is in the water that they hide the sacred instruments, an indication, so it seems to us, of their original matriarchalism. Just as the human being comes from the maternal liquid, so does Wãx-tĩ appear for the feast, coming from the water, represented by the instrument Mĩĩ. According to legend, the first human beings came from the water of the cachoeira of Ipanurê. We have observed, besides, that while bathing the natives immerse themselves a few times. Likewise when our oarsmen jump out of the canoe in order to drag it across the rocks, they also immerse themselves, even when there would be no need for it. When they swim, we have noticed that they prefer to do it with the face immersed in the water.

• [481]

778 Hence the concept of occult, sacred. We have heard talk of objects that were mĩĩã, that is, occult, mysterious.

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Tobacco is a magic substance. As a matter of fact, it is one of the principal and most used curing methods of the pajé. The smoke from the cigar can neutralize the malefices, drive away the storms, or attract them to a certain place, has an exorcising force in births and puberty initiation. For this reason it is even given to children three or four years old to smoke, at the feasts as well as outside of them.

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He almost daily walks great distances through the forest, to his clearing, which not infrequently is located several kilometers away from the maloca, or to hunt or to search for fruits. The woman, besides the great movement inside the maloca, which is forced on her by the preparation of the food, will take a long walk through the forest almost every day /404/ to reach her clearing, where, in the sun, she will walk three or four hours without stopping. There is no mountain climbing, because the region, in general, is flat. Gymnastic exercises or corporal contests, such as in other human groups, are not known (139).

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139. We have seen children who, playing, seize one another as though it were for open wrestling, without, however, throwing the companion to the ground.

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And horseback riding is known just as little. There are as yet no horses around these altitudes, even for use by the civilized.

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The sports practiced daily are the aquatic ones, that is, swimming and rowing. In the morning, before daybreak, everyone, without exception, goes to the river, a short distance from the maloca or povoado, and takes his bath. Even the babes in arms are taken along by the mothers and bathed. This bath is quick, one immersing oneself in the water three or four times and passing the hand over the body. Sometimes they steady themselves by the arms on some canoe tied up, and kick the feet in the water. Later, at midday, that is, during the warm hours, when they come back perspiring from the forest or from the clearing, they take another bath. This frequency at the river makes everybody learn how to swim. They swim well, but without much endurance. They never cross great distances by swimming. Perhaps no one would even swim a hundred meters for mere exercise.

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One of the aquatic amusements of the children is the one called Wāx-tf Max-kō, the son of Wāx-tf, an obvious reference to the legend of Nhamacurū (cf. "Lendas do Uaupés /Legends of the Uaupés/"). To wit: two children placed one in front of the other, with the arms toward the back, immerse themselves in the water simultaneously. Moments later, emerging at the same time, they embrace each other quickly. Then, again with the arms to the back, they immerse themselves, in order to emerge again, embrace each other, and sink into the water. This is done a certain number of times, until they become tired, and the entertainment ceases.

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Another frequent exercise is that of rowing. From childhood on, from about three or four years of age perhaps, they learn how to row and have their small oars. Not infrequently a child alone or two go rowing and travel kilometers from their own home. Many times it is the children who row, while the men attend to fishing from the canoe. This habit gives them surprising skill and endurance. They are capable of rowing ten or more hours a day and for six or eight consecutive days on long trips.

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The striking of the oar handle on the side of the canoe marks the rhythm, and, when there are several rowers, they take pride in the accuracy /405/ of the strokes, as if they were one single stroke. Three different rhythms are to be observed: 1st -- one faster, when they have need to reach some point, and in the currents; there are more or less three deep strokes in two seconds; 2nd -- when there is no current, they change to a slower rhythm: one measure yes and two no, so that one hears two sounds in the water (of two waves which form and strike against the canoe), having three strokes in five seconds; 3rd -- at times they take up another rhythm: two fast strokes and a slow and deeper one.

The following detail can be observed: the hand that holds the handle of the oar describes a perfect circle; and after they give a blow on the edge of the canoe, the oar remains for a moment lying over it, parallel to the water. In order to rest from the effort, they go to rowing from the other side of the canoe;

## THE CUBEO COMMUNITY

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regarded themselves as the superior of all other Indians who were driven back into the headwaters (Giacone, 1949, p. 5).

Thus the movement of Colombian settlers down the Vaupés River had a markedly disturbing effect upon the Cubeo by dispossessing them from their ancestral river. The first-ranking siba, however, did not leave their sites at the rapids from whence their ancestors are supposed to have emerged. But in staying on they succumbed most rapidly to the European influence.

Despite their strong orientation toward the river the Cubeo also make use of footpaths. Near the mouth of the Cuduiari, for example, a trail leads to the Querari. There are, in fact, many paths in the region that provide short cuts between rivers. Raiding parties come on foot to avoid detection, and paths are used for short journeys. The Cubeo Indian, however, is not, by preference, a walker.

## SIZE

The size of a clearing is variable, to a degree, depending upon the number of households and their ambitions for entertaining and for trade with the whites. A headman's household, which is always the most ambitious and is, therefore, the most productive, requires approximately two acres of manioc land for an annual yield of 300 baskets (30-60 pounds per basket). Most households among the *Bahukwa* averaged only 200 baskets of manioc a year and utilized accordingly a manioc garden of one acre. A sib center community of 12 households requires more than 12 acres for manioc cultivation as well as several acres more for the plaza and subsidiary cultivations, if the full burden of entertaining is left to one or two households, as is often the case. Satellite communities are often as small as three households and their clearings are proportionately smaller.

The Cubeo community is always small, rarely reaching a population beyond 16 households, a household in every case being limited to a nuclear family. The size of community seems to be a result of a complex series of adaptations of many elements to one another — architectural, ecological, sociological, and psychological. The architectural factor is that a community must be dominated by a single maloca. The largest maloca in the Northwest Amazon region is a 16-household dwelling with eight compartments ranged along each long wall. The smaller dwellings of the Independents can augment the size of a community. The fact is, however, that an Independent household has usually been formed for personal reasons, such as a quarrel with the headman, rather than for reasons of crowding.

tears the skin, and where a clumsy move shakes down hordes of stinging ants, or the canoe has to be pushed through narrowly spaced trees. Sometimes the canoe is portaged across a hilllock. The forest passage is made with light, quiet strokes in keeping with the silence Indians observe in the forest.

Canoes range in size from a one-man capacity to up to one ton. Each man makes a personal fishing canoe. Some prefer a four-man capacity, but the small one-man canoe is most popular. Every community has at least one large cargo canoe with a capacity ranging from a half to a whole ton. Usually made by the headman, it is for the use of all, for long trips, for transporting cargo such as farinha or palm leaves for roofing, and is the festive canoe that transports women and children to drinking parties. The headman is the owner but the canoe is taken freely by sibmen. Paddles are individually owned and are kept in the house, never in the canoe, but are freely borrowed.

Women do not own canoes, a canoe belonging always to its maker, but women have use of the large canoe. They do little unaccompanied traveling. I have rarely seen a woman alone in a canoe; she is accompanied at least by a child. A woman in a canoe alone is suspected of running away or of a rendezvous with a lover. Women walk great distances, but a man is ashamed to walk if he can go by water. A man who does not own a canoe is regarded as lazy and inept and some boys who have never learned to make a canoe are scorned by the girls and find it difficult to marry.

Canoes don't last long. Unless properly seasoned, the wood is cracked by the sun, and such canoes split quickly. Short splits are calked with pitch, stuffed with a rag, or smeared with clay. I have been in canoes that required constant bailing; but as a rule an old canoe is left at the canoe landing house for the children to play in. Finally it is sunk in shallow water at the canoe landing, where it serves as a receptacle for manioc set to soften. Good canoes are brought into the house and are used as chicha containers during a drinking party. On the Cuduiari, Koch-Grünberg saw canoes ornamented on the inside with painted designs, as well as paddles with painted motifs on the blades (1909, II, 89). By 1939 such embellishments had disappeared.

The Cube0 are careless in mooring canoes, and they float away but are always recovered. No canoes have ever been reported as stolen. A week may pass before an owner of a lost canoe goes to look for it. He waits until he needs it, for there is never any doubt that he will

cipals in the marriage were not attracted to each other. It is to avoid this embarrassment that the marriage party does not declare its intentions. They announce that they have come to visit relatives. They are made welcome, assigned to sleeping quarters, and are drawn into the general round of activities of the house. They may stay for many weeks. The groom-to-be joins in the activities of his age group, hunting and fishing with them. He spends part of his time in making gifts for his host's wife, who need not be the prospective mother-in-law, and for the mother-in-law-to-be as well, if he has been a guest in her household. He may make baskets, trays, or a hammock. Every woman treasures an object that a suitor has made. These objects, however, are not presented as marriage gifts but as offerings in return for hospitality.

The courtship itself is a slow process. For some time the prospective bride and groom virtually avoid one another. The young man is attentive to the other girls of the sib, and his own age mates, if single, act as though they are courting the prospective bride. They are all looking one another over. The young man's personality is evaluated, and his skills in hunting, fishing, and crafts are observed. The visiting party, for its part, makes close observations on the bride-to-be. The nature of this opening phase of the courtship in which bride and groom are being "looked over" is such that unexpected matches are sometimes made. It has happened that a boy who has been flirting with his bride-to-be's sister to divert attention from his real objective falls in love with her. Or the sister falls in love with the suitor and seeks her betrothed sister's permission to marry him. This happened among the *Bahukiwa*. A man, having reached the final stages of courtship with a girl, had arranged the formal elopement tryst with her. At the end it was the sister who appeared, explaining that it was she who wanted to marry him, with her sister's consent. The suitor was not disappointed, and all went well.

If the young man is satisfied with the bride-to-be the party prolongs its stay. Otherwise it leaves quickly. Once it has decided to stay, the groom awaits a sign of acceptance from the girl. One of the first indications of sexual interest that she shows is to run rather than walk in his presence. When the older folk see a girl running when she should be walking they smile knowingly at one another. One day she throws a handful of manioc mash in his face in the presence of company and laughs at him. He pretends anger and moves upon her. She pretends fright and runs off to her manioc garden, where he overtakes her. They have coitus and they are then engaged. She may show her interest in other ways, pinching him or cuffing him as she

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## 4

*The Forest Addicts*

141 The Tukano are small: a man rarely exceeds five foot six and the women are  
 164 often no more than four foot ten inches. To see a cripple or deformed person  
 291 is unusual. They are healthy and immensely strong. A man wears no more  
 301 than his loincloth, today cut from a piece of trade cotton but formerly a  
 strip of beaten barkcloth. Around his neck are three or four coils of minute  
 white porcelain beads, which are among the most valued objects of ex-  
 change; a tight string of black berries is strung on *cumare* palm fibre above  
 each elbow. The ears are often pierced with a short cane jutting out from the  
 lobe; sometimes a feather is put into the cane, or a flower replaces the ear-  
 plug. With their short, cropped hair and well-proportioned bodies they  
 stand out as strong figures, beautifully adapted to the forests in which they  
 live.

481 Their gait is jerky rather than slow and relaxed, indeed they almost run;  
 whether the Indian is out hunting or carrying heavy loads he always moves  
 147 in the same way. We could only look on amazed as our fifteen-gallon fuel  
 drums were carried for two- or three-hour stretches with no apparent diffi-  
 culty. They only showed any signs of wilting in strong sunlight; an Indian  
 would rather travel by night than on an open river in the midday sun; his  
 home is in the cool forest or under the dark eaves of the *maloca*. His face  
 302 painted red with *karayuru*, a bow and a quiver of curare-tipped arrows in his  
 411 hand, he has little sympathy for strangers and would rather remain undis-  
 609 turbed. It is therefore not surprising that the Indian's face tells you little.  
 When he stares at you with his black eyes, it is as though you were peering into  
 152 the cold unknown, and there is little warmth in his expression. We very sel-  
 dom noticed any demonstration of affection among the older people. Husband  
 593 and wife live together rather as a matter of arrangement than through love,  
 85 and tenderness was only shown to the younger children. The old people,  
 888 once unfit to go out hunting or to work in the plantation, may be neglected  
 in times of shortage and even left to die. They are no longer of any use to the  
 society, so it is best they go; for theirs is a harsh world where only the fittest  
 can survive.

576 Although the Tukano seem outwardly reserved, lacking in affection and  
 often proud, they are invariably very courteous. Their greetings are formal -  
 just as we shake hands they always exchange a lengthy stream of words. It is